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ABSTRACT

The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) provides funding to establish quality early childhood education programs that serve children eligible to enroll in kindergarten the following year. A vital component of CPP is to strengthen families and support them as participants in their child's education. District Councils made up of representatives of key stakeholders and service providers manage local CPP programs. The purpose of this handbook is to assist District Council members and others interested in the CPP to be able to provide high quality services. The handbook outlines: (1) criteria for selecting school districts for participation; (2) administration of the CPP; (3) areas to address in a comprehensive preschool plan--quality, staff development, family involvement, family support services, and program evaluation; (4) CPP funding and expenditures; (5) program requirements--licensing, Colorado quality standards for early childhood care and education services, accreditation, Colorado Department of Education on-site visits; (6) providers of Colorado preschool program services; (7) child eligibility; (8) child transitions; (9) individualized learning plans; (10) children's files; (11) Colorado Preschool Program effectiveness; and (12) frequently asked questions. (HTH)

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COLORADO PRESCHOOL PROGRAM:

2003-2004 Handbook

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Organizational Commitment

The Colorado Department of Education dedicates itself to increasing achievement levels for all students through comprehensive programs of education reform involving three interlocking elements: A) High Standards for what students must know and be able to do; B) Tough Assessments that honestly measure whether or not students meet standards and tell citizens the truth about how well our schools serve children; C) Rigorous Accountability Measures that tie the accreditation of school districts to high student achievement.

The Colorado Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or age in access to, employment in, or in the provision of any of CDE's programs, benefits or activities.

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Introduction and History of the Colorado Preschool Program

The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) began as the Colorado Preschool Project in 1988 when it was authorized by the Colorado General Assembly to serve 2000 four and five year olds in need of language development. The General Assembly created this program in recognition of the need to adequately prepare children with specific at-risk factors to learn. The intent was that helping these children at an early age could result in lower dropout rates, less dependence on public assistance, and less involvement with criminal activities.

CPP provides funding to establish quality early childhood education programs that serve children eligible to enroll in kindergarten in the following year. A vital component of CPP is to strengthen families and support them as participants in their child's education.

In 1992 the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 92-189, which resulted in the continuation of the Colorado Preschool Program as a permanent program. This bill also expanded the target population to not only include children in need of language development, but also children "who lack overall learning readiness due to significant family risk factors" and children being served by Social Services as neglected or dependent children.

The number of children and school districts participating in the Program has increased significantly since the Program began. Current statutes permit 9,050 children to be served by the Program in fiscal year FY 2003. This number includes a maximum of 1,000 children who can be served in the second half of their kindergarten day. Because the kindergarten program is part of the Colorado Preschool Program, the requirements established for CPP also apply to the full-day kindergartens.

Participation in the program is voluntary. That is, school districts do hot have to participate in the Program unless they choose to do so. In the program's first year of operation, 32 districts participated. In FY 2003, 154 districts will participate.

> "Our #1 focus should be on early childhood. If we're looking for academic success and if we're interested in a way to meet the state standards- early childhood is where we need to start."
>
> Glenn Davis,
> Superintendent, Huerfano RE-1 School District

The number of children who can be served in the Colorado Preschool Program both at a pre-K level and in kindergarten is capped at a level set by the State Legislature. When the Legislature funds new slots, school districts wanting to participate must submit an application to the Colorado Department of Education. Staff at the Department review each district's application and make a decision on whether districts qualify for CPP, and the number of Program slots they will receive.

District Councils made up of representatives of key stakeholders and service providers manage local CPP programs.

The purpose of this handbook is to assist District Council members and others interested in the CPP to be able to provide high quality services to young children and their families. It was developed with the input of many people working directly in the field of early childhood care and education.

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Of most importance was the assistance given by those currently working directly with the Colorado Preschool Programs across the state.

There is also a directory of the school districts participating in CPP on the CDE website. Feel free to use the directory to obtain information on what is happening in a specific program.

This handbook reflects what is required by CPP rules and regulations. A full copy of the rules and regulations is on the CDE Website. Throughout the book you will see numbers in parentheses like (5.01). These numbers tell you where to look in the rules and regulations to find the exact language regarding this topic. The handbook also contains language meant to convey the intent, or spirit, of the law, as well as information from CPP programs around the state on what it looks like in their community.

It is appropriate to make copies for district council members, providers, parents and anyone else interested and willing to review the contents of this handbook.

Contact Lori Goodwin Bowers directly at anytime with comments and suggestions.

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As you work with this handbook, please take the time to give us feedback.

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School District Participation

School district participation in the Colorado Preschool Program is voluntary. Districts wanting to participate must submit an application to the Colorado Department of Education. Applications are distributed to non-participating school districts when an expansion of the Colorado Preschool Program is authorized by the legislature. When there is an expansion of CPP, priority is given in the allocation process to those districts not currently participating in the program.

- 154 school districts participate in CPP in Colorado.
- 9,050 children will be served by the Program in FY 2003. This includes 1,000 slots for state-sponsored full-day kindergarten.
- The number of children who can be served in the Colorado Preschool Program both at a pre-K level and in kindergarten is determined by the State Legislature.

Criteria for Selecting School Districts for Participation in CPP:

Need: The Colorado Preschool Program is intended to serve children who are at risk for educational failure. National research suggests that about one-quarter of the kindergarten children in the nation are at risk for learning delays. In some cases the percentage of at-risk children in a district could be higher because of certain district-specific factors. Therefore school districts are selected based on:

- dropout rates within the district
- numbers of qualifying, un-served children
- test scores of children in kindergarten and the primary grades within the district
- demographic data
- geographic location of the community

Ability to Collaborate: It is also the intent of the Colorado General Assembly and the Colorado State Board of Education to fund those districts that demonstrate collaboration within the community in order to assure effective use of resources in the program. Priority is given in the selection process to those districts that can:

- create a full day, quality care and education program through existing resources
- coordinate district preschool programs with family support services
- develop a quality, comprehensive plan for involving families
- collaborate with public and private child care agencies located in the school district
- demonstrate a high degree of community involvement

Emphasis on Quality: CPP is based on a belief that quality early childhood programs and services offer children a greater chance of success in school. Programs must demonstrate the capacity to deliver quality services as measured by the Colorado Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education Services.

Administration of the Colorado Preschool Program

Each school district is required by statute to establish a "district council." This district council insures that decisions about the program are made locally and that major stakeholders have opportunity for input.

The local school board has final responsibility for the application to participate in CPP, and for operation and maintenance of CPP within the school district. No action taken by the council is final until approved by the school board.

District Councils:

Membership: The Superintendent of the district appoints members to the district council.

Members of the District council are appointed for two-year terms and may be reappointed by the superintendent.

Members of the school district will elect a chairperson. The chairperson will serve a one-year term and may be reelected for a second year.

The council should meet a minimum of three times per year. (4.03)

If a community already has some type of early childhood care and education council, there is no need to duplicate it. If the membership meets the requirements, the same group may serve as the CPP district council as well.

Appointed members of the district council must include:

- two parents of preschool children in the district preschool program
- two members of the business community
- a representative from the health department
- a representative from the department of social services
- a representative from the county agency involved in job services and training
- a representative from publicly funded early childhood education agencies located in the school district
- a representative from a privately funded child care center located in the school district

These representatives are listed to insure that a comprehensive approach to early childhood care and education services is taken. Responsibilities of the district council include:

- Studying and assessing the need for CPP in the school district.
- Developing and recommending to the local school board eligibility factors specific to the community and a plan for identifying eligible children.
- Developing and distributing requests for proposals to local publicly funded early childhood education agencies and privately funded child care centers to determine who will provide program services, and recommending qualified providers to the local school board. This should be done at least every five years.
- Recommending to the local school board whether its program should be provided by the district or by publicly or privately funded providers, or some combination.
- Participating in the development of proposals to CDE requesting participation in CPP.
- Providing information and data to CDE for reports on the program.
- Developing a *comprehensive plan* for the delivery of services. This comprehensive plan is outlined on page 6.

A Few Final Thoughts...

The rules and regulations give a framework for the district council's responsibilities. As district councils have developed, how they do what they are asked to do has often become a reflection of their community. Many have had a sense of "making things up as we go along".

Their job is to manage the Colorado Preschool Program, and as they do this, management styles take on the unique character of the individuals and community involved.

The district council takes on the design and implementation of the program. As is often the case, it is asked to put together a comprehensive, high quality program with limited resources. This means council members must have broad knowledge of the resources available in their community as well as the ability to creatively put the pieces together. In the resource section of this handbook you will find a list of potential resources and partners to help you get started.

Welfare reform has started a process of moving more funding to the local county level. This means communities will be making decisions on how state and federal block grant dollars should be spent, with a different kind of involvement of state level agencies and programs. While solid local partnerships have always been important, they are now critical to success. When you think of who your potential partners are, be creative and think more broadly than you ever have.

An important part of managing is solving problems. By design, problems that arise within CPP are best addressed locally. Problems, concerns and questions should all be brought to the District Council. A great deal of CPP policy is set by the District Council and can be changed by the council if the policy is no longer productive. Many programs have found that it is important to have a written policy document that reflects the decisions made by their councils. The role of the Colorado Department of Education is to be a resource to district councils and local community members. CDE has and will continue to provide assistance and support whenever possible.

Our CPP District council has worked this year to assess the needs of our community and re-evaluate our qualifiers for CPP eligibility based on these needs. As a growing community, we have looked at prioritizing qualifiers to try to meet the needs of children and families most at risk. Because of our growth we have more children eligible for CPP services than available slots. We all value early intervention and recognize its positive impact on the lives of children.
District Council, Brighton School District 27J

The Springfield Preschool local council has influenced the program very positively this year. For the first time ever parents hold all three elected roles! Our council addresses the early childhood needs of our community! Our voluntary membership and excellent parent participation reflect the value of the council. Issues of business for the year include: council orientation, by-law review, confidentiality & membership, building fund fund-raising, new facility input, accreditation input, family & classroom observations, parent involvement, family functions, child care needs within the community, "Moms and Tots" community playgroup, Baca Learning Cluster trainings, Child Find process, interagency collaboration, "Totes for Tots" & standards.

Springfield Preschool Local Council
Springfield RE-4, Baca County

Our CPP District Council is under the umbrella of the Routt County Early Childhood Focus Group. Many early childhood issues, programs and parent resources are gathered under this umbrella. Included are: Child care centers (various directors); CPP; First Impressions; part C; Social Services; Grand Futures; Visiting Nurse Association; Horizons CCB; Routt county Learning Cluster; Mental Health and parents. Working under this umbrella has increased awareness of and efficiency in accessing services, programs and resources for children in our small, relatively isolated communities.

South Routt District, RE-3

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Comprehensive Plan

What happens in the classroom is only one component of what children, families and programs need to be successful. Each component listed below is key to achieving immediate as well as long lasting success. The District Council should address the following areas and questions in their comprehensive plan:

1. Quality of Program:

In general, research shows that the key to an effective preschool program is high quality. The quality of early childhood education is critical in determining whether it helps a child develop a strong foundation for future learning and development. It is not appropriate to have or to contract with a program that does not demonstrate the capacity to deliver high quality developmentally appropriate services.

Does each site in the program use the Colorado Department of Education Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education to guide program evaluation and planning? In what ways do you monitor programs to be assured that they are of high quality? Are the programs accredited or working towards accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children?

District councils are required to make at least two on-site visits per year to all individual providers in their district that serve CPP children. The purpose of these visits is to monitor overall program compliance, and make recommendations for any needed improvements. The council should then follow up with recommendations for improvements and report on their monitoring and evaluation to CDE in the year-end report.

Each of the program sites is willing to use CDE's Quality Standards to self-evaluate their program on a yearly basis. Each is licensed and has qualified staff hired at each site. The E.C.E.R.S. (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale) has been used to help each provider look at their program from a different perspective.

This year, the C.P.P. liaison spent one morning in each contracted site so that either the director or teacher was free to go visit and observe in another early childhood setting. This opportunity has helped the providers gain insight, which allows them to further evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their program. It also affirms all the positive things they are currently doing in their programs.

Durango School District 9-R

2. Staff Development

What are the training needs of the CPP staff and how will they be addressed? In developing this part of the plan, input from teachers concerning their educational needs should be considered, as well as the resources that are available within the community. Collaboration with the local learning clusters (if available) should also be considered.

In October each staff meets with his/her supervisor to develop a Professional Development Plan. The staff and the supervisor are jointly responsible to meet the goals stated in the Plan. In January, supervisors complete a Performance Appraisal on every regular staff member. Staff is encouraged to continue their formal education in pursuit of higher degrees, in addition to ongoing training offered by the Center through outside consultants. Release time is provided for classes and tuition costs for one class per year is paid by the Center as funding allows. Staff receive an additional pay increase of 2.5% upon completion of certifications/degrees.
Ignacio School District 11JT

3. Family Involvement:

What are the roles and expectations of parents whose children are served in the CPP? In order to participate in the program families must assume responsibilities in the educational program of their child. How programs form agreements with families, based upon the needs and abilities of the family, should be outlined in the comprehensive plan.

The parent involvement in this program is really unique. I have never seen such a high percentage of parents involved on a weekly basis before in any program academic or otherwise. I believe the reason for this is the way the classroom is made to feel like our classroom and we are made to feel like we belong there. I credit the classroom staff with encouraging parents in the eternal benefits of being involved in their children's education, especially at this time in our children's academic lives.

CPP Parent
Harrison School District 2

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4. Family Support Services:

What other support services are available to families that contribute to the health and well being of the children? District councils should consider how they might partner with other early childhood care and education programs to extend services beyond a half-day, nine-month program. Consideration should also be given to who else in the community can help provide:

- special education services?
- information on nutrition?
- immunizations?
- health care?
- dental care?
- social services?
- mental health services?
- recreation opportunities?
- parenting education and support?

Keep in mind that districts do not have to provide all these services, but instead should help families to access the services within the community.

Program Evaluation:

How well does the program prepare children for success in school, i.e. what gains do children who participate make in their cognitive, motor, behavioral, and social development that encourage success in school? How well does the program prepare families to participate in and support their children's educational experiences? Do the effects of participation in the program last?

District councils can address these questions through:

- portfolio assessments of child progress
- parent satisfaction surveys
- tracking children's progress through elementary school
- reviewing elements of the comprehensive program
- monitoring programs with on-site visits, ECERS evaluations
- reviewing materials prepared for NAEYC accreditation
- The council will document its monitoring and evaluation findings as part of its year-end report.

The comprehensive plan should be discussed and updated by the district council each year and then filed with CDE when the school district submits its reapplication.

CPP Funding and Expenditures

The state legislature authorizes the Colorado Preschool Program as part of the School Finance Act.

- Funding is provided at .5 FTE for each child. School districts report children funded through CPP in the October 1 count date.
- Children *cannot* receive funding through the Colorado Preschool Program **and** special education.
- It is the district council's responsibility to be clear on what it has defined as direct services and how CPP money is being spent in its district.

Districts may provide program services in three ways:

- the district may provide all services in school district operated preschools (e.g. usually existing elementary schools). Special education, CPP, Title 1 funds, private tuition etc., can be blended to operate these schools.
- the district may contract out its entire program to community providers (e.g., Head Start of private child care facilities) with proper support and monitoring
- the district may use a combination of district and community providers.

Each district that contracts with community providers for program services is responsible for negotiating the rates that it will pay to the providers. The Department is not involved in selecting providers, setting rates, or paying the providers, and the Colorado Preschool Act does not address payments to community providers.
If services are contracted out, it is the responsibility of the school board to ensure that money provided for the Colorado Preschool Program is used for services connected to CPP.

In addition to the contracted rate paid monthly to providers, many districts also provide funding to providers for the following direct program services:

- Child Identification/Assessment
- Developmental screenings
- Home Language/Literacy materials
- Transportation Reimbursement
- Professional Development
- Conference registrations
- In-service training
- Parent Liaison/Family Support Services
- Monthly newsletter to families to extend learning activities and parenting ideas into the home
- Service coordination for children and families
- Classroom equipment and materials
- Monitoring quality
- Professional Resources

Districts receiving funding from the Colorado Preschool Program both for preschool and full day kindergarten, must establish a preschool program fund. The Financial Policies and Procedures Advisory Committee have designated this as Fund 19 in the Chart of Accounts. Within this fund CPP funded preschool programs should have a 3141 grant code, and CPP funded kindergarten programs should have a 3142 grant code.

In Fund 19 a budget for CPP must be provided that is equal to or greater than the district's per pupil operating revenue (PPOR) multiplied by the district's CPP funded preschool or full day kindergarten enrollment. If districts have other sources of funding that are used to help pay the costs of providing preschool services to children eligible for CPP, that money may also be

deposited in the CPP fund. However districts are not required to deposit it there.

If all of the money in that fund is not expended by the end of the school year, districts must carry over any remaining moneys to the next fiscal year.

The Legislature has been very clear that the only appropriate expenditures from the CPP fund are those that are made to provide services to children and families in CPP. Allowable expenses can include:

- Teacher and paraprofessional salaries and benefits
- Supplies and materials
- Expenses associated with home visits
- The entire cost of any preschool program contracted services
  - Services provided by a district to children enrolled in CPP or their families
  - Associated professional development activities
  - Costs that a district would not otherwise incurred but for the services provided in conjunction with the preschool program.
  - A reasonable allocation of district overhead costs, which should not exceed five percent (5%) of the total CPP funding provided to the district.

In determining overhead costs districts may use their restricted indirect cost rate as long as it does not exceed 5%. Any overhead costs claimed by a district that exceed CDE's calculation of restricted indirect cost rates for LEA's must be verifiable.

Program Requirements

1. Licensing:

Every classroom where CPP preschool services are provided must have a valid license from the Division of Child Care at the Department of Human Services. Full day kindergarten programs funded through CPP do not have to be licensed. This license indicates that minimum health and safety standards have been followed. A license is required for any space where CPP services are delivered, including public school classrooms. If a school moves CPP to a different place every year, they must insure that each new setting is also licensed. These minimum standards are just a beginning.

2. Colorado Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education Services:

True quality goes beyond licensing requirements. Quality programs attempt to provide the best possible environment for all children. The basic elements of quality that identified in the Colorado Preschool Program Act include:

Class size: There should be a maximum of 15 children per classroom with an adult child ratio of one to eight in both preschool and full day kindergarten programs. One of the primary determinants of quality in early childhood programs is the relationship between children and teachers. It may be difficult for a teacher to develop a close relationship with his/her students if the class size is too large or if the teacher is responsible for too many children.

The relationship between a teacher and child is especially critical when serving children who are at risk for school failure. Multiple opportunities for one-on-one communication are critical for children to develop language, math and self-regulation skills.

Frequency of contact: The law requires 360 contact hours a year, which is usually 10 hours per week. Classes are to be held for four half days, or the equivalent per week. The fifth half day should be used for home visits, staff development, or planning.

Learning plans: Each child should have an individual learning plan which identifies the child's needs in language, cognition, gross and fine motor development, social skills and self-esteem.

Family involvement: In a quality early childhood program, parents and providers learn how to be partners in a child's education. CPP requires programs to have a written plan for parent involvement (6.05). In addition, parents are asked to enter into an agreement with the program that specifies what this involvement looks like.

Programs that are able to engage parents in their child's education can strengthen parents' ability to support their children and reinforce the learning that occurs in the classroom. Early childhood programs can break down barriers with families, such as lack of trust in schools and fear of failure, to set a pattern of parent involvement that can be followed through a child's school career.

In addition to providing a great program for young children parents can learn about their child's needs and receive services before entering the regular school system. The preschool programs also teach parents about the many facets of their child's development and how to help their child to have a successful school experience.

District Literacy Coach, Adams County School District 14

Staff Qualifications: The qualifications and training of teaching staff are the key element to achieving positive outcomes for children and families. The Colorado Preschool Program does not require a teacher to be certified in early childhood care and education because of the differing requirements in Head Start, private child care and public schools. It is important however, that each teacher have the appropriate skills, knowledge, and dispositions to teach young children.

Any teacher must be able to show that they have received education credits in the field of early childhood, and have demonstrated knowledge in child development, developmentally appropriate practices, multicultural education and developing parent partnerships.

If teachers lack this knowledge base, school districts and district councils must ensure that early childhood professionals supervise staff. In addition, districts should support staff members in meeting these requirements.

Relevant Research:

The most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status but the extent to which that student's family is able:

-To create a home environment that encourages learning,
-To express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers, and
-To become involved in their children's education at school and in the community. (Source: *A New Generation of Evidence*, 1994)

Programs demonstrating long-term effects in reducing crime and antisocial behavior combined early childhood education and supports for families.

(Source: *The Future of Children*, 1995)

Chicago Child-parent Centers found that parents participating in their program, which emphasizes quality education for children and a strong parent support and involvement component, were more likely to be involved in their children's elementary school. In addition, they were more likely to complete high school. (Source: *Can Early Intervention Prevent High School Dropout?* 1998

* Trained and educated staff contribute to improved cognitive and other developmental outcomes. Better trained staff are more likely to create warm, caring environments that are responsive to the needs of children and help prepare them to succeed in school. Studies have shown that college degrees, in particular, make a difference in the quality of teaching. (Source: *Seeds of Success*, 1999)

* Trained and educated providers are more communicative with parents and are more responsive to their needs. (Source: *Not by Chance*, 1997)

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To further define quality care and education for young children, the Colorado Department of Education was required by law to develop program standards for CPP (6.03). Programs must demonstrate the capacity to deliver quality, developmentally appropriate services as measured by these standards (6.01), which are defined in the Colorado Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education Services.

The Quality Standards are based on the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC's) Developmentally Appropriate Practices and the Accreditation Criteria and Procedures of the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. In addition, Head Start Performance Standards were also consulted in the development of this document, among many other resources.

The Quality Standards are meant to be comprehensive in scope and cover the full range of components essential to a quality program. They address elements affecting basic classroom environment like curriculum, staffing patterns and interaction among staff and children, as well as elements that address children's broader needs like health and safety, nutrition and family/staff partnership. These Quality Standards are meant to be commonly applied across all programs receiving Colorado Department of Education funds. It is important that the District Council and all providers of CPP use the quality standards document and be familiar with the available supporting resources.

3. Accreditation:

The rules and regulations encourage all programs receiving money from the Colorado Preschool Program to be come accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (6.03).

For more information about NAEYC Accreditation visit the NAEYC website:

www.naeyc.org

4. CDE on-site visits:

On a regular basis staff from CDE will visit districts that receive funding from the Colorado Preschool Program. The purposes of these visits will be to provide technical assistance to districts, as well as to determine if districts are complying with state law in the operation of their program. Areas that CDE staff will review include:

- The school district's screening process
- The eligibility criteria used by programs for determining which children will be served by CPP.
- The composition of the district council and its work
- How the quality of the CPP program is monitored.
- How the effectiveness of CPP is evaluated
- The financial activities regarding the preschool program.

Who Provides Colorado Preschool Program Services?

A major responsibility of the district council is to develop a process that allows community early childhood programs to apply for the opportunity to deliver CPP services. One step in this process is to develop and issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to the community (4.09). **School districts are required to send out RFPs at least once every five years to assess whether alternative community providers are available.**

RFPs should be issued as early as possible to allow for a process that is accessible to existing programs. Current guidelines state that applicants should have **at least 45 days** from the date the RFP was released in order to prepare and submit a proposal.

The intention of the law is to establish a fair competitive process in which decisions are made at the local level. The goal is to provide children and their families with the highest quality services available. There are experienced quality early childhood programs already in existence, many using the Colorado Quality Standards. Many are also funded by programs like Head Start, Special Education, Title I, Child Care Assistance Program or other potential CPP partners. Participation in the CPP has often served as a catalyst for bringing public and private programs together to offer parents more and better choices. Use of the Quality Standards by community early childhood programs means that the quality of care and education improves for all children.

All sites providing CPP must have a valid license from the Division of Child Care at the Department of Human Services, -- including public school classrooms. This license ensures that minimum health and safety standards are being followed. If a school changes the location of its CPP, the new space must also be licensed. The Division of Child Care has made staff available to work with you throughout this process. CPP funded full-day kindergarten programs do not have to be licensed.

When developing a RFP process it is important that district councils keep the following in mind:

* Providers in contracted sites need sufficient lead time in order to plan with confidence. Ideally district councils would make their decisions and notify contractors before the end of the previous school year. The number of students allocated to each site should match the number requested by that site whenever possible.

* Parents should be provided with information regarding the number and location of contracted sites, so that their choice can be honored whenever possible. Parents should be encouraged to visit sites before making a decision.

*All providers, including public schools, must be licensed by the Colorado Department of Human Services.

*District councils should make every effort to identify sites that are able to provide full-day, full-year services to meet the needs of working parents. This is especially important with welfare reform.

The district council reviews proposals and makes funding recommendations to the local school board. The school board then makes the final decision on who will provide CPP services (4.10).

At our site we serve children in the Head Start program, Colorado Preschool Program, children with special needs, and typically developing children who pay tuition... Many of these children have entered preschool with few experiences outside their homes. Now they are excited about school and much more prepared to enter kindergarten the following year. The diversity in our classrooms is representative of our community and through the classroom environment we have had the opportunity to share in each other's lives and grow together.

Director, Preschool, Eagle County

We have participated in the program for several years, and have an excellent collaborative relationship with the school district. We are also able to participate with the Policy Council to the degree we are able to and desire to. It is important to us, as community citizens, that children are served in highest to lowest risk order. We are confident that this is happening.

The Policy Council routinely inspects our school, and any deficiencies noted are quickly corrected. In addition, we are using the ECERS assessment tool within our District to ensure that the preschool environments are appropriate. You can be assured that CPP is properly administered in the Poudre School District, and complies with all governing rules and regulation.

President, Private For Profit Center, Larimer County

Being a part of the Colorado Preschool Program has also given us the financial stability to be able to enhance our program by allowing us to purchase items such as a listening center, new teaching materials and opportunities to get extra teacher trainings as well as giving us a little more financial stability which has enabled us to give teachers a small raise. The value of being able to retain our staff if a wonderful asset and we all thank you for the opportunity to meet the needs of our community. The opportunity to collaborate with our school district has been a great benefit to our rural community, wonderful families and staff.

Private Provider, Durango School District 9-R

Children benefit from all of this, but most of all, they thrive in the quality classrooms. Most programs in this district are literacy-based. Children entering kindergarten after a year in a CPP classroom certainly arrive ready to learn. They have developed classroom social skills, been introduced to a variety of books, math concepts, gross and fine motor activities, pre-academic games, science activities and have learned that they are important people.

Classroom diversity is also achieved by enrolling CPP students in the classroom. This is especially true for the private contract preschools. Bringing together special needs, CPP and tuition-paying children and families into one classroom was but a dream in the not too distant past.

Director, Private Preschool, Adams Twelve Five Star Schools

Creating Quality Partnerships

The CPP legislation gives communities the freedom to decide locally who is best qualified to deliver CPP services. It is clear that decisions are to be based on a program's ability to provide quality services. It is also important that a provider be committed to using the Colorado Quality Standards document as a program guide for on-going quality improvement.

The Colorado Quality Standards were developed as a working document, a framework, a tool to help programs implement their commitment to improving quality. While it was never meant to be used as a checklist to decide who can or cannot provide CPP services, it does provide the difficult decisions.

As a district council designs a process for choosing and working with contracted providers, it is important to utilize the experience and expertise of existing early childhood programs in the community to the maximum extent possible. Involvement in CPP can be viewed as a way to enhance the quality of services for all children by expanding the use of Colorado Quality Standards. Every effort should be made to make current providers aware of CPP and the possibility of their participation. Current licensed providers often have achieved professional accreditation, indicating that they have put a great deal of time and effort into developing high quality services.

Child Eligibility

The number of children who can be served in the Colorado Preschool Program is capped at a level set by the State Legislature, both in the preschool program and in the extended kindergarten program It is the responsibility of the local District Council to establish a clear policy for the determination of child eligibility. Because CPP is capped it is important to have a well thought out process to ensure that the program serves children with the highest need.

Section 22-28-106 of the Colorado Revised Statutes defines the eligibility criteria for children who may be served in CPP. These guidelines include:

- Children must be 3, 4 or 5 years old.
- If a child is served as a 4 or 5 year old, the child must be eligible for kindergarten the next year and may only participate in CPP for one year.
- If a child is served as a 3 year old, the child must have 3 significant risk factors in their life that put him or her at risk of school failure. A child may participate in CPP for a second year if he or she continues to have risk factors present in his or her life.
- Significant family risk factors that affect overall learning readiness must be present in a child's life. Significant family risk factors is defined by the legislature to mean any of the following:
    - The child is eligible to receive free or reduced-cost lunch pursuant to the provisions of the Federal "National School Lunch Act."
    - Homelessness of the child's family
    - An abusive adult residing in the home of the child
    - Drug or alcohol abuse in the child's family
    - Either parent of the child was less than eighteen years of age and unmarried at the time of the birth of the child.
    - The child's parent or guardian has not successfully completed a high school education or its equivalent
    - Frequent relocation by the child's family to new residences
    - Poor social skills of the child
- Children are also eligible if they are in need of language development, including but not limited to the ability to speak English.
- Children are automatically eligible if they are receiving services from the State Department of Social Services as neglected or dependent children.
- The parent(s) or legal guardian must enter into an agreement with the program regarding their involvement in their child's education.
- If a child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and qualifies for state PPR funding from special education, that child cannot be funded under CPP.

District councils can define and expand the list of risk factors in their community. However, in doing so, those district councils must be able to clearly demonstrate how those risk factors affect a child's ability to be successful in school.

The children funded for the second half of their kindergarten day through CPP must also meet the eligibility requirements.

In addition, programs must be able to provide justification in all of the children's files for funding children through CPP.

How does a school district determine eligibility?

Multiple methods should be used to determine a child's eligibility, and qualified personnel should conduct all assessments. These comprehensive assessments should include a combination of approaches. These can include:

- parent interviews,
- naturalistic observations of the children,
- collection of demographic data
- standardized developmental screenings

Many communities use the same screening tools for all children. Then they use the results to determine eligibility for a variety programs, such as CPP, Title I, and Head Start. A good screening process will also identify children who should be referred to child find for possible evaluation.

District councils should use the information gathered through their child screening process, as well as any other sources available, to determine which risk factors are present in their community and are having the greatest effect on young children and their families.

Results from the screening, paired with observation data and family input, can also used to develop an individual learning plan for each child. Whenever possible you will also find an explanation of how screening information is evaluated to prioritize participation in CPP. To find out more about any of them, get in touch with the contact people listed in the CPP directory.

Transitions

The ***Administration of the Colorado Preschool Program Act*** {2228-R6.01} states that programs providing services for children funded through the Colorado Preschool Program must demonstrate the capacity to deliver high quality developmentally appropriate services, as measured by the ***Colorado Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education Services***.

The "Quality Standards", (Section E-15), identify transition (the movement or change of children from one program to another) as an important part of quality services. Additionally, federal guidelines require that the transition of preschool children with disabilities, as well as the transition of all preschoolers who are entering Title I schools, must be addressed. The focus of current transition efforts has changed from bridging the gap between different types of programs to the provision of continuity in the key elements that characterize all good early childhood programs: *developmentally appropriate practices, family partnerships, and supportive services*.

The process of transition, whether it is into a preschool program from infant/toddler services, or from a preschool program into kindergarten, should be planned. The planning should begin at least six to nine months prior to placement of the child in the new setting and should involve families and the teaching team from the child's current, future or past programs.

Individualized Learning Plans

The ***Administration of the Colorado Preschool Program Act*** {2228-R604 (3)} states that each child should have an individualized learning plan. The plan should include identification of the child's needs in the following areas: language, cognition, gross motor, fine motor, and social skills/self-esteem.

The ***Colorado Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education Services,*** (Section B-2), state that such an individualized learning plan should be developed by a collaborative team, which includes teaching staff, family members, specialists and/or others requested by the family or program. The plan should address priorities applicable to the child's total day across a variety of settings (home, neighborhood school, community preschool, and/or child care center).

In order for a child's activities to be purposeful, a plan which has specific, individualized goals for that child should be developed with the family--ideally, at the same time as the child's enrollment, but certainly within the first two weeks of attendance. An optimum means of developing such a plan is through a home-visit or other informal family contact, prior to the beginning of the school year. Families and teaching staff should revisit the individualized learning plan, with progress updated based on ongoing evaluation, at least twice during the course of the school year.

Mesa County Valley School District #51 has printed on the back of their developmental profile sheets a sequence of normal growth and development. As staff shares information about their child's progress with families, they can refer back to the sheet to explain predictable sequences of development.

An Individual Learning Plan is developed for each child before they start school. It is reviewed and updated during Fall and Spring parent teacher conferences. A portfolio of each child's work is kept on file. Each child has a classroom journal which contains work samples, anecdotes and photographs representing the child's development. Developmental checklists are used in Sept. and Feb. to note progress and to plan activities to meet the children's individual needs. High/Scope COR assessment is used. Parents and teachers meet informally when needed.

Fleming School District RE-3

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Children's Files

State regulations require that districts be able to verify that children participating in CPP are eligible. Therefore districts should keep screening records on all the children who are participating. In addition, districts must include a child's Individual Learning Plan, information required by the Department of Human Services, and information required by their own district.

Licensing Requirements:

All preschool sites providing CPP early childhood care and education services must be licensed by the Division of Child Care in the Colorado Department of Human Services. In the Rules Regulating Child Care Centers it specifically outlines information that should be recorded on each child every year.

CPP Requirements:

1. Verification of child's eligibility factors:

"When programs are monitored for compliance, local educational agencies shall be able to justify children being counted for funding as meeting the criteria."

- Screening information (actual screening documents)
- Demographic information
- Hearing/Vision test results
- Parental intake forms

2. Individual Learning Plan

Your School District Requirements:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Other Items to Consider:

Enrollment form
Examples of children's work
Copies of communications with parents
Other forms of authentic assessment

Colorado Preschool Program Effectiveness

Colorado Preschool Program District Council's are required to select methods for measuring and reporting child progress and parent involvement in the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP). Results from these methods must be submitted annually to the Colorado Department of Education in the annual reapplication for CPP. Any measurement of the effectiveness of CPP should consider children's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development, as well as effects on a family's involvement and support for their children's education.

District Councils use a variety of methods for determining the effectiveness of their programs. Below are some strategies that are currently being used and their results.

"The students who have been in the Colorado Preschool Program in Jefferson County are now performing at, or above, their peers according to the District reading and writing assessments, even though they entered the program with many risk factors. The Colorado Preschool Program is an educational reform that works!"

Position Paper from the Preschool District Council, Jefferson County Public Schools

In Fremont RE-1 Canon City Schools, the "School Readiness Task Force" developed specific criteria to measure school readiness by using 26 of the 49 items on the Kindergarten Progress Report. Each year kindergarten teachers use this method to rate the readiness of their students when they enter school.

Colorado Student Assessment Program:

School districts have been able to look at how children who were in CPP as four year olds did on their third grade assessments. This information shows clear positive results. When scores were compiled across the state the results were as follows:

- ***68% of children were assessed at Proficient or Advanced levels***
- **22% of children were assessed at the Partially Proficient level**
- **10% of children were assessed at the Not Proficient level**

School districts report that the average child enrolled in CPP has 3.7 factors in their life that put them at risk of school failure. Given this fact, the scores reported show clear positive results.

Greeley 6 School District in Weld County has been collecting data on how "CPP graduates" are performing on the CSAP and other district assessments in third, fourth and fifth grade. They have found that students who have participated in CPP are scoring as well on these assessments as their peers, and in some cases better than the district wide average.

What is even more important to report is that on the 3rd Grade 2000 CSAP 52.31% of the CPP graduates who are Hispanic scored advanced or proficient, while only 36% of the other Hispanic students in the district received that same score.

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Parent Surveys:

Many districts include parent surveys as a part of their strategies for determining CPP effectiveness. Studies of individual families show that wheat the family does is more important to student success than family income or education. This is true whether the family is rich or poor, whether the parents finished high school or not, or whether the child is in preschool or in the upper grades. Programs that are able to engage parents in their child's education can strengthen parents' ability to support their children and reinforce the learning that occurs in the classroom. Early childhood programs can break down barriers with families, such as lack of trust in schools and fear of failure, to set a pattern of parent involvement that can be followed through a child's school career.

Each year every CPP program surveys families and asks the same three questions. The following survey responses are a strong indication of the effectiveness of CPP.

- 98% of families felt their child has benefited as a result of being in CPP
- 97% of families felt their child has the skills needed to be successful in school
- 97% felt comfortable participating in their child's education.

Survey of Kindergarten Teachers:

In Colorado, in a 2001 survey of kindergarten and first grade teachers, Educare and the Colorado Children's Campaign found that teachers believed four out of ten children (40%) entering the classroom were not academically prepared to learn.

On the other hand, in selected school districts where kindergarten teachers are surveyed in the Fall regarding the readiness of CPP graduates, it was found that experiences in the Colorado Preschool Program can dramatically decrease the number of children identified as below grade level. **In those school districts only 16.7% of CPP graduates were rated below grade level by their kindergarten teachers.**

School District No. 60 has begun developing a longitudinal study utilizing scores from the third grade Terra Nova. For those children who were enrolled in CPP four years ago, 73.4% were reading at proficient and advanced levels on the third grade Terra Nova. It is important to note that these are children who were determined to be at risk when they entered preschool.
Pueblo School District No. 60

Las Animas RE-1 School District's CPP District Council has developed a "Five Year Goal Check" These are evaluations sent out to parents of children enrolled in their CPP program five years ago. Parents are asked about children's success in school, relationships with their peers, ability to initiate new activities and what role parents feel CPP might have played in their child's development. With parent's permission, the children's current teacher is also contacted for feedback on the children's behavior in class, academic progress and relationships with peers.

In addition to the State standards testing provided at third, and sixth grade, our school keeps a portfolio of work that follows a child throughout the early elementary years. We provide a "Body of Evidence" of growth in all academic areas. Because of the close work that the teachers at Calhan provide many students are followed throughout the elementary years. Since we have added the preschool program there are fewer students needing support services throughout their elementary years.
Calhan RJ-1 School District, El Paso

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Frequently Asked Questions

What does 'developmentally appropriate' mean?

The phrase 'developmentally appropriate' is based on the understanding that there are some predictable, universal developmental stages that young children go through that are physical, social, emotional and cognitive. Knowledge of such child development helps insure that the learning environment and experiences are appropriate for the age of the child. Developmental appropriateness also acknowledges that each child is a unique individual. The curriculum, environment and experiences should be responsive to individual differences. 'Developmentally appropriate practices' should match a child's development while challenging a child's interest and understanding. CDE has videotape available that shows what developmentally appropriate preschool programs look like. It is called "Chelsea Has a Great Day".

Does each school district have to have its own district council?

Not necessarily. Some smaller communities that are geographically connected have chosen to share a common district council. As the need for quality early childhood programs continues to grow and be recognized, there is sometimes an advantage to having a council focus on a single community.

Can my child attend any preschool?

The district council has identified certain preschools that have demonstrated an ability to provide a quality preschool program. As a parent you would be expected to choose one of these. If you have another program you would prefer using, you should contact your district council to see what your options are.

Can I contract with a church based program?

Sections 7 and 8 of Article IX of the Constitution of the State of Colorado address the subject. Section 7 provides as follows:

"Neither the general assembly, nor any county, city, town, township, school district or other public corporation, shall ever make any appropriation, or pay from any public fund or monies whatever, anything in aid of any church or sectarian society, or for any sectarian purpose, or to help support or sustain any school, academy, seminary, college, university or other literary or scientific institution, controlled by any church or sectarian denomination whatsoever; nor shall any grant or donation of land, money or other personal property ever be made by the state, or any such public corporation to any church, for any sectarian purpose."

Can I contract with a church based program? (continued)

Section 8 of Article IX provides in part as follows:

"No sectarian tenets or doctrines shall ever be taught in the public school..."

If you have questions after reading the language of the Constitution, show this to your attorney for a professional interpretation.

Can Special Education and CPP each pay a portion of a child's preschool program?

No, this is one area where the law is very clear. CPP and Special Education are both funded out of school finance dollars. It would be like paying for kindergarten one half day in one school and a half-day in another, or counting the same child for both first and second grade. If a child qualifies for preschool and therapeutic services through special education, it is important that he/she be identified and begins receiving the appropriate services as soon as possible.

Can we blend funds?

Many communities have been working on ways to blend funding for the past few years. There are several sources of funds including Head Start and early childhood special education that are currently being put together to provide full day, full year services to better meet the needs of working parents and their children. As local communities continue to identify the barriers to effective blended funding, state agencies have tried to address the policy changes necessary.

As plans for welfare reform take shape and policy makers learn more about the importance of quality early childhood programs, the information gained from the experience of blended funding becomes a key aspect of policy decisions.

How can I subscribe to the CPP listserve?

It is important to subscribe to the CPP listserve. We have started to use the CPP listserve as our primary source of communication. If you have not subscribed to this list please do so as soon as possible.

To subscribe:

Send an e-mail message to:

lyris@web.cde.state.co.us

In the subject line type: subscribe cpplist John Doe (or whatever your name is) and then just click send and you will be added to the list.

To send a message to the listserve:

cpplist@web.cde.state.co.us

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